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“INTERLINGUA” AND THE PROBLEM OF A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE.

IT might be thought that the construction of an artificial language was a product peculiarly characteristic of our mechanical age. The very notion calls up an image of august congresses with bespectacled professors haranguing, of sheaves of printed circulars, of motions proposed and rescinded, of heat and recrimination. As a matter of fact the idea goes back to the dawn of modern science. Descartes played with it: “It will help peasants,” he said, “to judge better than philosophers now can of the truth of things”—a claim which is perhaps not so far-reaching as it looks at first sight. It engaged, as is well known, the powerful and versatile mind of Leibniz. But I do not propose to give here an account of the older projects previous to the efflorescence of language-making which took place in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and must refer readers who desire information on this subject to such works as John Venn’s *Principles of Empirical or Inductive Logic* (1889), Couturat’s *La logique de Leibniz* (Paris, 1901), Couturat and Leau’s *Histoire de la langue universelle* (1903), Dr. Alberto Liptay’s *Eine Gemeinsprache der Kulturvölker* (1891), and W. J. Clark’s *International Language: Past, Present and Future* (London, 1907). Nor have I space fully to describe even the modern movement. My object is merely to examine the merits of one particular universal language, that called “Interlingua,”

of which Prof. Giuseppe Peano, of Turin, the founder of modern mathematical logic, is the most prominent advocate.¹ But in order to understand the nature and objects of this language, it will be necessary, first, to take a summary survey of the process by which it has been evolved from its predecessors, of which the first was Volapük.

* * *

Volapük, now more effectually dead than Greek or Latin, without the sweet savor of either, had a brilliant but short career. It was the creation, like its successor Esperanto, of one man, having been invented by J. M. Schleyer (now Monsignore), a clergyman at Linzelstätten in Baden, who promulgated it in 1880. Its success was rapid; a few years saw the establishment of hundreds of Volapük societies in all parts of the world, and at one time there were 25 periodicals printed in Volapük. Its decline is to be ascribed largely to its highly artificial and arbitrary vocabulary, and to the competition of Esperanto (1887), a far better language, which combined the merits of Volapük—the regularity and simplicity of its grammar—with a less repulsive vocabulary. The name Volapük itself illustrates its chief defect; it is a mysterious deformation of *Weltsprache*. The grammar required all substantives to begin and end with consonants, and the memory was burdened with barbarisms like *fablüd* (= fabrik), *tlup* (= troop), and *blod* (= brother).

The Volapükists invited all friends of the universal language movement to an international congress, held at Friedrichshafen in 1884. At the second congress, held at Munich in 1887, a Universal Language Academy was founded, with the objects of preserving unity and perfect-

¹ This paper was undertaken at the instance of Professor Peano himself, who welcomed it as a means of bringing Interlingua before the public of the United States. But of course Professor Peano is not responsible for any of the views or statements contained in it, with some of which he would doubtless disagree.

ing Volapük, and it is from this body that the "Academia pro Interlingua," of which Professor Peano is director, is descended. The first director of the Academy was Prof. Dr. August Kerckhoff of Paris. He at once set to work with great diligence, and by the beginning of 1889 much had been done towards preparing a new grammar and vocabulary. But at the Paris congress of 1889 rifts already began to appear. Schleyer, the founder, who had been given the ornamental post of *Obervorstand*, would hear of no important changes; the director and the academicians quarrelled; the various Volapük societies and journals had begun to split up into factions; and a mass of grammatical projects, which the organization was incapable of sifting, poured in upon the Academy. The result was that interest and propaganda quickly died away. In 1891 Kerckhoff resigned, and in 1893 the election, by a provincial committee, of Woldemar Rosenberger of St. Petersburg as director, was confirmed. He proceeded to reform the vocabulary by restricting it as far as possible to words already international (for instance, instead of *blod* he proposed *frat*; Mr. Plum of Copenhagen, however, preferred *fratr*). Investigation showed that there are about 8000 word-stems common to English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish, and accordingly it had by now become the practice for all artificial languages to select their word-stems as far as possible from the living languages and from Latin, preference being given to the stems common to most languages. The grammar also was re-modeled, and under Rosenberger's auspices the work of the Academy took a new lease of life. Meanwhile a number of other languages had sprung up, many of which influenced the deliberations of the Academy. Of these the principal were, according to Rosenberger,² the following:

² W. Rosenberger, *Wörterbuch der Neutralsprache*, Leipsic, 1902, p. 300.

1. "La lingvo internacia," Dr. Esperanto (Warsaw), 1887.
2. "Kosmos," Eugen A. Lauda (Berlin), 1888.
3. "Spelin," Prof. J. Bauer (Agram), 1888.
4. "Myrana," J. Stempf (Oberreuth, Bavaria), 1889.
5. "Lingua internazionale," J. Loth (Vienna), 1890.
6. "Universala," Dr. Eugen Heintzeler (Stuttgart), 1893.
7. "Novalitiin," Dr. E. Beermann (Nordhausen), 1895.

The list is interesting as showing that the age was as fertile in artificial languages as in patent foods, and indeed many of the names would fit the one product as felicitously as the other. The point to be noticed about the academic language thus evolved is that it differed essentially from previous artificial languages in being, not the creation of an individual, but the result of the labors of an international society. It preserved the Volapükistic principles of almost completely phonetic writing, of no exceptions to rules, and of simplicity and ease in forming derived words from the given radicals; and it was much easier to learn than Volapük, because most of its words were immediately intelligible to all educated Europeans and Americans. In 1898 the Rev. M. A. F. Holmes, of Macedon, N. Y., was elected director of the Academy, and "Idiom Neutral" was adopted as the name of the language.

Volapük was thus completely transformed. But the independent growth of a host of other languages, and particularly of Esperanto (as the language invented by Dr. Zamenhof of Warsaw had come to be called, from the pseudonym used by him) had produced a situation which became acute in the opening years of the present century. In the autumn of 1907 an international committee met in Paris, to choose the best system. Most of the members were people who at least coquetted with Esperanto; yet they could not deny its grave faults, and a com-

mission was accordingly appointed to draw up an improved Esperanto, which was subsequently called Ido. More than nine-tenths of the Esperantists refused to accept the reforms, and nearly all the adherents of other systems decided to work further on a scientific basis. The most prominent joined the original Universal Language Academy, which, under its present name of "Academia pro Interlingua" had been breaking new ground, not by concocting yet another artificial language, but by taking Latin and divesting it of its flexions and complicated grammar.³ In 1911 the Academy consisted of more than 100 members in Europe, America, Asia and Oceania, including 18 university professors.

There thus exist to-day two main divergent tendencies, both the fruit of the movement that began with Volapük. On the one hand we have in Idiom Neutral, Esperanto and Ido, the attempt to create languages, each fulfilling more perfectly than the last the ideal of being completely rational and easily intelligible, in theoretical independence of any one natural language. Interlingua, on the other hand, while inspired by much the same ideals, seeks to attain them by a different method: it is not a purely artificial language, but tries to secure the same simplicity and intelligibility, and perhaps also the same thorough-going rationality as the artificial languages, by taking one natural language, Latin, and cutting away all its irrational elements, its complications and anomalies. Before we compare the merits of these two systems, it will be well to clear our ideas by shortly considering the principal conditions which a language must fulfil to be completely "rational." In doing this I shall refer only to Ido; for Esperanto, which was widely diffused until recently (especially in Russia, where it was enthusiastically welcomed by Tolstoy), appears now

³ See two papers by Professor Peano: "De latino sine flexione," *Revue de Mathématiques*, Vol. VIII; "Il latino quale lingua ausiliare internazionale," *Atti della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, Vol. XXXIX, Jan. 3, 1904.

to be on the decline, and is generally admitted to be inferior to Ido, which, as is well known, enjoys the support of the eminent mathematician, logician and philosopher, Dr. Louis Couturat.

* * *

1. Perhaps the most important principle which an ideally rational language must observe is that which may be called the *principle of maximum analysis*. On a superficial view it looks as if English, when it takes six words, "those who are about to die," to express what in Latin only requires one, "*morituri*," were a degraded jargon as compared with Latin. But in fact, though the extreme synthesis of Greek and Latin permits the most fascinating refinements of style, this tendency of modern languages to express each separate idea by a separate word is a great step forward in evolution, both as approximating speech to the ideal of a logical symbolism, and as enormously simplifying grammar. Leibniz already perceived this: "In grammatica rationali necessarii non sunt obliqui, nec aliae flexiones."⁴ An artificial language, therefore, will carry to its utmost limits the process of getting rid of all flexions, such as the case-endings of substantives, adjectives and pronouns, and the personal, temporal and modal inflexions of verbs. Leibniz even suggested that a plural sign was unnecessary,⁵ but this may be doubted, though some natural languages do sometimes dispense with it, e. g., German "*tausend Pfund*." The truly rational language will be even more analytic than English, for English, though the best of the major European languages in this respect (perhaps agglutinative languages like Chinese are better still), is still far from perfect; for instance, we unnecessarily keep such oblique cases as "him," "them," "her," and such plural forms as "these," "those." Now it may be observed at

⁴ Couturat, *Opuscles et fragments inédits de Leibniz*, Paris, 1903, p. 287.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

once that Ido falls short here. In its verbs, while abolishing the personal flexions, it keeps a full set of flexions for the three tenses of the indicative (*me kredas*, I believe; *me kredis*, I believed; *me kredos*, I shall believe), and also for the three corresponding infinitives and participles (present infinitive, *kredar*; past infinitive, *kredir*; future infinitive, *kredor*; present participle, *kredant*; past participle, *kredint*; future participle, *kredont*). Dr. Couturat regards this as a merit,⁶ but I think that the logic of it, though symmetrical, is shortsighted. On the principle of maximum analysis we need no separate tense- or mood-forms for the future, nor, probably, for the past: all can be expressed by combining different auxiliaries with a single fixed verb-stem. A present participle active is probably necessary, but past and future participles active are certainly not. Similar remarks apply to the retention by Ido of inflexions for the imperative, conditional and subjunctive moods. In English the absence of a flexion for the imperative is not found troublesome: when necessary the symbol ! can be used to mark it.

The principle of maximum analysis abolishes that part of grammar concerned with the declension of verbs, regular and irregular, and substitutes fixed verb-stems and a few auxiliaries, by the combination of which all the required moods and tenses can be expressed. Also, for the synthetic method of expressing relations by means of case-endings (e. g., "*Ich gab ihm einen Kuss*") it substitutes the analytic method of prepositions, already carried far in English ("I gave a kiss to him"). Thus Dr. Couturat suggests⁷ that even the accusative case might be expressed by a preposition, as, he might have added, is actually done in Spanish. But this remark, together with our last example, indicates an obvious limitation on the principle of maximum analysis

⁶ "Sur la structure logique du langage," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, Jan. 1912, p. 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

—a limitation which may be formulated as the *principle of uniformity of position*.

2. If an unrestricted range be given to the principle of maximum analysis, we should always have one word for each separate concept. But this would be intolerably cumbersome in practice; the functions of speech are not the same as those of a logical symbolism, and we wish our language to have as much esthetic merit as is compatible with precision. Now cumbrousness can be avoided without loss of precision by invoking the *principle of uniformity of position*. That is to say, we shall have fixed rules (they will be few and simple) according to which the meaning of a sentence will depend partly on the relative positions of the words in it. All languages use this principle, some more than others, and it is not unknown to symbolic logic. In English, for instance, in "I gave him a kiss," we avoid *both* a special flexion for the dative case, *and* the expression of it by a preposition, by assigning to the pronoun a definite position in the sentence. It is obvious that this device, perhaps the most ingenious of all linguistic triumphs, makes the allocation of a preposition to the accusative case superfluous: that case can always be expressed by the mere fact of its coming after a transitive verb. No doubt ambiguities will sometimes occur (e. g., "I love him more than you"), but even a rational language may safely leave something to the context. But the importance of this principle, from the point of view of economy, lies in the generality of its application. When it is said that the meaning of a sentence depends on the relative position of the words in it, I include under "words" what are usually considered as parts of words—namely affixes, suffixes and particles. Thus, in English, such suffixes as -al, -ality, -ous, -ousness, -hood are really words standing for general concepts, which, combined in a certain position with other words, express concepts of less generality. An artificial

language will copy this feature of natural languages, but whereas the natural languages, owing to the accidents of growth, perform the process with infinite irregularity and caprice, it will do it systematically and uniformly. For instance, "what can be" will be expressed by one symbol added to verbs (Ido, *-ebla*: *manjebla* = eatable), and "what ought to be" by another (Ido, *-enda*: *punisenda* = what ought to be punished). In English the absence of some such symbol as the last has caused an ambiguity with serious consequences: "desirable" has to do service both for "what can be or is desired" and also for "what ought to be desired," whence J. S. Mill and others could plausibly identify what is desired with what is good. And in France it is conceivable that one might be hanged under a misapprehension, for no one knows whether *pendable* = "what can be hanged" or "what ought to be hanged." Other suffixes and affixes in Ido are *-eso* = "the fact of being so and so" (*beleso* = beauty, *avareso* = avarice); *-ozo* = "full of" (*kurajozo* = a brave man); *-ajo* = "ness" (*blankajo*, whiteness, *vakuaajo* = a vacuum); *-iv* = "capacity for" (*resist-iv-eso* = capacity for resistance); *-em* = "tendency to" (*resist-em-ezo* = tendency to resist); *-atr* = "participating in the nature of" (*sponjatra* = sponge-like); *-al* = "relative to" (*religiala milito* = a war of religion, whereas *religioza milito* = a religious war); *ne-fidela* = faithless; *des-ordino* = disorder; *-ega* = augmentative (*grandega* = enormous); *-eskar* = inchoative (*dormeskar* = to fall asleep); and so on. These examples show how in an artificial language groups of cognate words can be formed on a regular system, thus avoiding the ambiguities that attend the formation of such compounds in the natural languages; and they also illustrate (a point to which I shall return) one of the ways in which a rational language must be most conspicuously artificial.

We may accordingly sum up the superiority, in point

of rationality, of an artificial language over any natural language, under the above two main heads. It is, or should be, more analytic, and more consistently so, than any actual language; its grammar should be capable of being written on a half-sheet of note-paper. And, by remembering the rules governing the relative positions of words and parts of words, it should be possible to detect with certainty the precise meaning of any sentence. These features make it easier than any foreign language to speak, write and understand accurately.

* * *

We are now in a position to answer the question, How does the semi-artificial Interlingua compare with a purely artificial rational language? I shall try to show that, while there is not much to choose between them as regards their observance of the principle of maximum analysis, Interlingua must, as long as it remains only semi-artificial, be inferior as regards observance of the second of the above principles. But it does not follow that it is either better or worse on the whole as a universal language. To decide that question we shall have to take into consideration other factors independent of our two principles: it may be an easier language for other reasons; and much depends on the purpose for which it is intended.

And, first, as to Interlingua's observance of the principle of maximum analysis. The Academy has not yet (October, 1912) decided on the flexions of verbs, but there are indications that it will not make as clean a sweep of them as is made even in English, and that thus it will not observe our first principle more closely than Ido does. It has been decided to adopt for the indicative of all verbs the Latin 2d person imperative singular; and the person-endings, singular and plural, are of course discarded, as in Ido. Thus "I love" = *me ama*, "you love" = *te ama*, and so on. But I observe in the journal *The International*

Language for August, 1912, (edited by Gerald A. Moore, London) that special forms are used for the conjunctive and infinitive moods: for instance, *esserè possibile adoptare* = "it would be possible to adopt"; and a prominent supporter, J. B. Pinth of Luxemburg, proposes other forms for the future, the present participle active, and the imperative.⁸ On the other hand, Professor Peano told me in conversation that he used no flexion for the future, but expressed it by an auxiliary. In the case of substantives, adjectives and pronouns, the Latin ablative singular is used for all cases, the plural being indicated by the suffix -s. However, one of the great merits of Interlingua is its elasticity; every one can be left, within wide limits, to use as few or as many flexions and other grammatical forms as he pleases, without being any less readily understood by any one who has learned Latin; and we may therefore hope that the Academy will refrain from officially fixing a set of verb-flexions which, besides violating logical purity, would be of no practical use.

Secondly, as regards the principle of uniformity of position, I am not aware that the Academy has considered any proposals for determining the meaning of a word by its position in the sentence, or for the regular derivation of cognate words from one another by means of suffixes and affixes. Indeed it seems that in this last respect Interlingua must from its nature be inferior to a purely artificial language. Take, for instance, such a group of English words as elect, elector, election, elective, electioneer, electioneering. A purely artificial language will represent all the members of the group by suffixes arranged on some logical principle of derivation, but Interlingua cannot do this without abandoning its Latin character to such an extent as to be practically indistinguishable from Ido or Neutral. For one of

⁸ J. B. Pinth, *Die internationale Hilfssprache Interlingua*, Luxemburg, 1911, p. 6.

the chief ways in which modern European languages have developed and are developing every day, is by forming new words, as new meanings are required, by piling up suffixes on the top of old words (for instance: utility, utilitarian, utilitarianism; intellect, intellectual, intellectualism, intellectuality), and the number of new words created by this process is so great that Interlingua is in a dilemma. Either it must form such compounds for itself, only on a logical plan, and not haphazard like the natural languages; or it must get round them by periphrases. In the latter case it will be as inapt for the expression of living thought as classical or medieval Latin; in the former, its vocabulary will be nearly as much inflated with purely artificial products as Ido or Neutral, and it will lose the specific element of Latinity which distinguishes it from such languages. For, if it does adopt some rational system of deriving cognate words from one another, it is hard to see in what way it will differ from, for instance, Ido. It will not differ greatly in vocabulary. The first two resolutions passed by the Academy in 1910 are (1) That Interlingua shall have a vocabulary as international as possible, and as little grammar as possible, and (2) That all words common to English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Russian shall be adopted. Now all the purely artificial languages that are up-to-date aim at having a vocabulary as international as possible; and we have seen that the grammar of Interlingua is little, if at all, simpler than theirs. Nor does the third resolution of the Academy—That all Anglo-Latin words (some 55,000) be adopted—differentiate it: the best artificial languages also adopt these words, with the result in practice that both they and Interlingua are dialects of Neo-Latin. We shall therefore await with interest the carrying out of the Academy's fifth resolution: That a vocabulary of the words not defined by the above resolutions be prepared; for the nature and bulk

of this supplementary vocabulary should be decisive of the future character of the language. If a layman may express a hope, it is that the above-mentioned dilemma will be escaped by leaving each Interlinguist to form his compound words for himself, *not* on any logical plan, but haphazard, as seems most convenient. It is true that in that case Interlingua must, *pro tanto*, renounce the hope of being completely rational, and consequently of being universal in one of the senses in which the artificial languages aim at universality; but I shall argue presently that this is not a disadvantage.

Meanwhile two minor points of interest may be noted. The Academy has decided to adopt the usual nomenclature, already to a great extent internationally standardized, in botany, zoology, chemistry, etc. This, as enabling it, for instance, to preserve the universally recognized symbol Cl. for chlorine, gives it a distinct superiority over Ido, which calls chlorine *kloro*.

The Academy has resolved that the articles, when useless, ought to be suppressed. Probably they are more often useful than not, though there are no articles in the Slavonic languages. Many Interlinguists use *il* (contracted from *ille*) to represent the notion, so important logically, which is denoted in English by "the."

* * *

The advocates of Interlingua claim that it is superior to any of the purely artificial languages, because (1) it is more analytic, and (2) it deforms the international vocabulary less excessively. But we have seen that, as at present written, it does not seem to be markedly more analytic than Ido; and that, if it refrains from deforming the international vocabulary, it must be at the cost of being less completely logical than an artificial language. At the same time, its superiority to the purely artificial languages must, I think, be admitted; but this superiority depends (and its

supporters do not seem to notice this) on its not trying to be a *universal* language in any broader sense of the word. That is to say, it is certainly more readily intelligible and more easily managed by any one who knows a little Latin than any of the purely artificial languages, and this fact makes it better fitted than any of them to serve as a medium of communication between men of learning and science of different nationalities. Any one who knows a little Latin can at once understand the following. "Volapük es mortuo ab Esperanto, isto es in periculo per Ido; quale solutione es possibile post 'latino internationale'? Nullo alio; nam isto plus non contine uno elemento arbitrario, et habe simplicitate in grammatica superiore multo ad Volapük, et ad omni derivato."⁹ But it does not seem to be generally realized that it can retain this advantage, which makes it a handier substitute for the scientific dog-Latin (such as Euler's) of the 17th and 18th centuries, only so long as its ambition is restricted to being universal in this narrower sense of being a *lingua franca* for savants. For there are two other principal senses in which a language may be called universal, and it seems (unfortunately, as I think) that Interlingua is intended to be universal in these senses as well.

A language may aim at being universal in the sense of Leibnitz's "universal characteristic." Professor Peano, though he goes on to notice the essential difference between a language and a system of logical notation, seems to have this aim in mind when he describes as follows the process by which he produced his "Latin without flexions": "The study initiated by me is based on a series of logical equivalences, containing in one member one word or one flexion, which is not contained in the second member. Hence, if we substitute constantly the second member for the first,

⁹ Proceedings of the *Academia pro Interlingua*, Vol. III, 1912, p. 155, Turin.

we can remove from Latin that word or that flexion. Proceeding thus, we shall arrive at determining what is the minimum number of words, affixes and suffixes, sufficient to express all ideas, and we shall thus construct the *minimum Latin*. This method is an application of mathematical logic, which, by a succession of equivalences, permits the decomposition of a totality of mathematical ideas into primitive and derived ideas."¹⁰ I have pointed out that this task is performed by the purely artificial languages also, and more completely by them than by Interlingua, and that, if Interlingua emulates them in point of complete rationality, it is bound to deform the international vocabulary as much as they, and thus to become equally difficult, even to people who know a little Latin.

Now evidently a language might be perfect as a "universal characteristic," and yet be used by only a few people. Interlinguists, however, often speak as if they intended their language not only to be as completely rational as possible, nor to be merely an auxiliary language for the learned, but also to aim, as do the purely artificial languages, at being universal in the further sense of being used by every one who comes into contact with people of other speech than himself; they wish it to serve as an international medium for commerce, travel and the publication of works of literary art. Thus the veteran *Weltsprachler*, Josef Bernhaupt, in a message addressed to the Academy, writes (sinning unnecessarily against the principle of maximum analysis), "Artista, advocato, filosofo, medico, oratore, poeta, professore, sculptore, etc., debe potere esprimere seos cogitationes et seos sentimentos cum maxima precisione et sine ulla difficultate. Si Interlingua non habe ista qualitate, illa vale nihil et non poterà essere, et non sarà in ullo tempore, lingua de tota humanite."¹¹ It seems

¹⁰ Peano, "Il latino quale lingua ausiliare internazionale," *Atti della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, Vol. XXXIX, Jan. 3, 1904, p. 9.

¹¹ Proceedings of the *Accademia pro Interlingua*, Vol. III, 1912, p. 146.

to me that this inclusion of all mankind, the grand object of all makers of universal languages, is chimerical; that it is not possible of attainment, even if it is desirable; and that its advocates tend greatly to exaggerate the benefits that would flow from it, were it attained. I may perhaps be allowed, in conclusion, to say something on these points, in order to justify my hope that Interlingua will not, by aiming too high, throw away the opportunity which it has of doing service to mankind.

* * *

The reason for thinking it impossible to establish an artificial language which shall be universal in this wider sense is drawn from experience, and is therefore not conclusive; it does, however, raise a strong presumption, since the history of such languages since 1880 seems to show that a general cause is at work to produce their rapid rise and equally rapid decay. The idea, once launched by enthusiasts eager to promote the spread of knowledge, the fraternity of mankind and "the federation of the world," is taken up by large numbers of the moderately leisured classes, and the construction of an idiom free from the absurdities of a natural language goes on apace. But presently inconsistent projects, whether in grammar or vocabulary, engender hostile sects, the organization breaks down, enthusiasm languishes, and the ground is left clear for some new construction, which in its turn will suffer the same fate. It seems, in short, inevitable that different sections of the public should prefer different words and different grammatical forms. No central committee is likely to be strong enough to reconcile the dissentients; if it is tactful (and committees tend to be tactful) it will enact a compromise disgusting to all alike. It may be argued that Interlingua, not being a purely artificial language, is exempt from this doom. I have tried to show that if it claims at universality in the same sense as the

artificial languages, as there is danger of its doing, it must become as artificial as they, and it is a fair inference that in that event its history will proceed on the same lines.

But, even if we suppose the practicability of a universal language in this wider sense, is it after all a thing so greatly to be desired? It is usual to speak as if it were not only highly desirable but a necessity. The modern growth, it is said, of international intercourse, caused by steam and electricity, has been accompanied by no corresponding increase in the ease with which men can communicate their ideas; a universally intelligible medium is now as necessary as the telephone or telegraph; and such a medium, by in turn reacting favorably on international trade and communication generally, would advance the cause of universal peace. Another argument is that increased international intercourse makes it more necessary than formerly for large numbers of people to learn several foreign languages, and that, all of them being illogical and complicated, this involves a strain on mental energy and an overweighting of the curricula of schools, which would be saved by the acceptance of one single universal idiom.

I do not want to deny that there is something in these arguments, though perhaps, if space allowed, it might be shown that there is not as much in them as is usually thought. What I want to point out is that, if we accept them as conclusive, a consequence follows which the advocates of a universal language always seem to disregard,—namely that we must give up something which is undoubtedly of great value. That many people are forced by their vocation to learn one or more foreign languages, which *ex hypothesi* they would not learn if there were a universal language, is certainly a great good, since in this way a certain measure of insight into one another's mental life and traditions, and some appreciation of one another's literatures, are fairly widely diffused among all polite com-

munities. These collateral advantages accrue, for instance, to every scholar and man of science and to every trader who learns a foreign language because it is necessary for his particular study or trade, and in proportion as the *Weltsprachler* attain their ideal these advantages must be lost. The question we ought to ask ourselves is, whether we can be sure that the benefits caused by a universal language, supposing it established, would outweigh or even be equal in value to what must be lost in the process.

It is too often forgotten that in this world many things desirable for their own sakes are in fact incompatible with one another, and whoever considers what sort of things *are* thus desirable, must feel that the answer to our question is at least very doubtful. Now acquaintance with a foreign language is, quite apart from its usefulness, one of those objects that are desirable for their own sakes; for one thing, all natural languages (even German) have peculiar beauties of their own, whereas few will maintain that an artificial language, however rational, is capable of the same kind of beauty as the rude natural growth. It may indeed be said that a rational language has that sort of esthetic merit that comes from perfect logical precision,—that it is impossible, for instance, to make a pun in it. To this it may be replied that people have the language they deserve: if their ideas are logical, their language will serve their turn well enough, and no study of a rational language can be a short cut to clear thinking.

To sum up. The value of universal acquaintance with an artificial language seems to consist almost solely in the fact that it would be a means to other valuable things, such as increased international intercourse. But a large part of the intrinsic value of these very things consists in something which the artificial language, if it is to be effective as a means, must destroy,—namely the knowledge of foreign languages which large numbers of people are at pres-

ent forced to acquire. And it is impossible to feel sure that among the effects produced by a universal language would be any whose value would make up for the loss of this knowledge.

This argument, however, does not apply to Interlingua, provided it accepts the more modest rôle, for which it is admirably fitted, of a medium in which scientific works may be published and correspondence be carried on between the learned. The usefulness of such a medium is obvious. If there are any writers so hard-pressed that they must forego the advantages incidental to learning to read three or four foreign languages, they would still be able to keep up with the work of their foreign colleagues; the expense and labor of translations would be saved; and the profits of authors and publishers would be increased, because an international public would make large editions possible, and the cost of production would be proportionately diminished. Such are some of the benefits that may be expected, if a simple form of neo-Latin, easily intelligible to educated people, can be brought into general use; but they seem likely to be lost, if, sacrificing the substance to the shadow, the Academy tries to rival the universality of the purely artificial systems.

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